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# Bard

## INTO THESE OTHER WORDS

Struggle to keep an eye on the natives  
the Dæmon borns us. Spigot  
uncontrollable, it gushed all night.  
By morning I was someone new  
setting out for the post office  
like a man in a canoe.  
The isolation. Kayak for example,  
a world full of kayaks and the sun rising.

I helped a self forgive me, you.  
There was no one waiting, the dream  
remains frightening whenever I remember,  
there was no conspiracy you thought  
and the man you were looking for  
constantly got off the bus  
while I was talking. My fault,  
like so many things, my desert poetry,  
my collection in little amber boxes  
of *mégots illustrés*, cigarette  
butts smoke by famous men.

And now the sun's in my eyes too,  
one more elegy. November this time  
belongs to the colors, the library  
gapes for more victims, inside  
even the walls have words  
and no one needs to dream.  
A library's a place half inside your body

anyhow, a kind of toilet  
where the excrement remains  
but you are flushed away.

Take then away from now.  
A specter calls. The birds  
("believe the birds") interrogate  
the little seeds, they eat,  
last innocents in creation.  
Uncreated. A handle for your heart.  
This interlude in the partite  
is brought to you by the disaster,  
what's left after your anger,  
a mad friend foaming at the heart.

Or are we trapped in quotations?  
My legs are sore from yesterday  
walking around the invisible basilica  
three miles around the walls of it  
streets of the city that made me born.

5 November 2002

## CUNEIFORM ENTITLEMENTS

to write by touch  
pressing it in  
so that which takes  
the word is changed by it  
forever, not in substance  
but in form, amen

do you hear me?  
This is what music means,  
a soft prophecy that changes time  
and wakes me up so I can see  
all things awake around me

a word is a photograph  
stilled of the whole movement  
to see it, the boring word context  
is used for this, but maybe  
everything there is can only be  
seen con-text, with the word  
that pauses, that discloses.

A word  
fits into language  
as a finger sinks into clay  
presses, even the idlest touch

a fingerprint remembered

What do I leave in you

narrow furrow in such a broad tablet

furrow after furrow

always changing direction

always filling up the field

and when there's no more room is that a word?

6 November 2002

## LEND ME YOUR DECEIVER

so I can love love too.

There were so many bricks  
in the garden wall  
I could never tell which brick  
was the special one  
the one that really was the wall  
while all the rest  
cherry red they were and hoar a bit  
from so many winters  
between Mark Twain and now  
were just attendant circumstance  
as the grammarians says  
or a cast of thousands  
trying to represent  
the huge enormity of time or wall  
or holding flowers captive  
or keep deer out, those elegant  
suburban nibblers who look like love  
a bit and delicate but run away

so where is the wall in all those bricks  
the one I love and where  
is botany among chrysanthemums  
even in the gruff November wind  
still nubby yellowbronze an inch  
out of reach of my ankle?

I come to you as an essentialist  
in a random neighborhood, missionary

to put my finger on the spot  
where heaven touches earth in you  
successfully as Everest but very small  
right here or maybe not  
at least we're out of the chill old garden —

there can only be one of everything,  
a strange game where every card's the ace.

7 November 2002

## **BUT THIS WIND IS YESTERDAY**

a miller and his daughter ground it

I dreamy it sifting through my lower body

σπλαγγνα the vitals they said

between the liver and the come-again

where what I am is different

from what I think

and all I am

is ready to become another animal,

god, looking glass, missionary,

man,

it's up to you, my dear,

my surrogate reality in apple yard

and the least I whisper in your ears

is heard by Napoleon on dank St Helena's

wondering when his time too will come again.

7 November 2002



## EVERYTHING GOES UP TO THREE

then starts again.

Sunrise. Three fingers  
on each hand, three hands  
to write three different tongues,  
three's enough, the mother's  
the father's the child's.

The secret of all beauty  
is speaking the child's language  
from the mother's mouth  
while the father listens  
all ears. Because an ear  
shapes what is muttered  
into what can be heard.

Mutter. She is in control  
of what is said, a father's  
language is resistance,  
just resistance. A child's  
is penetration, opening  
the open. Give me rules  
to break them, give me boundaries  
so I can conquistador a while,  
transgress the smug horizon.

8 November 2002

# GLA[N]S

Stroke by stroke  
the finial is shaped  
until it speaks

This is the end of a man  
the spar, the jib  
the mountain on a shallow sea  
the acorn that springs a thousand oaks  
the mute conspiracy, ruby,  
weakforce, shipwreck, fallen mast  
beagles barking in the swamp of fugitives  
hangdog, apple pip, smoothest stone  
ever-budded never blossoming rose

Of course the end of one begins another  
how would language be  
if you were not previous to me

being other you make  
everything possible  
almost necessarily so  
“Adam’s first bite retched into speech”  
I was saying that sin made him vomit  
and what he vomited was language

most felix culpa of all our felixes

most like a red fox nuzzling your matrix

so uttering is othering  
so the ductile power  
must operate upon  
interior or inferior material

as to say, following the tall precisian,  
breath is the magma of the heart

we orifice

And 'we' obsesses an altogether  
no one really believes in  
do we?

The red person in the pale hood  
talks to himself in your mirror

You want him too Him you is want  
A word wants

Dico tibi

a word wants

A word wants to get out  
but does it want to get Out  
because that's where you live  
(out = other)

or does it just want to get out  
and you are witness?

Are you hearing me  
or am I talking to you

it's rare  
these two  
to happen once

I am always at the boundary of myself  
a self is always a boundary  
of something else

Our oldest superstition is language  
that the word can breach  
that something can be said

it is more beautiful than hula dance and Christmas tree  
it is the Pope on fire and Athena odalisque

o moon  
you old dictionary

you remember  
every word we ever said  
but you're sleeping

Who will tell me what I mean?

Is it still my animal when it's sleeping?

Purr to me  
outsider, let me hear  
the bronze wheels rattle  
that sneak the old moon  
down the sky

she was a word once  
before she was every

the lonely language no one speaks  
a kind of everlasting Latvian  
high above, spilling  
moonlight but making no further sense  
to pester us with information

I began my life by being you

The Autobiography of Karl Marx  
as told to Alcibiades in Hell  
while both were sleeping  
translated into modern talk by Theodor Adorno  
thence into Spanish  
by Lorca's last boyfriend  
withered now but still wears lipstick  
from whose mouth  
disguised as a girl from Ohio  
I heard it  
murmured sweetly by the fireplace

colored flames from salts of metals

green fire she pressed up against me  
the negative weight of human narration  
it doesn't press us down it raises  
it supports us as we listen

the whole narrative only exists  
to bear onwards to you  
the words by which it's spoken

put the man inside the woman and the clock shrieks

The real  
is what which begs for mercy

The blue flame burns only under water

O you again, you are the lathe  
on which such wood is turned  
friction and fantasy and dread  
explosion underground in Sweden  
a hundred miles away drunks stagger  
in the street by the canal

from one thing said

because a drunken person is invisible to him or herself

she or he lives alone in language  
a plaything of that wind  
for the term of drunkenness

sobriety means the sleep of language

people use other sign systems then  
money and knives and tambourines  
the long imbecile sentence of guitars

Youless, morning strikes  
And then I understand  
how the system works,  
the steering wheel, the three-egg omelet  
tipping in diners, the self-serve pump  
the cash machine and first communion  
it all makes sense  
when you flee from it over the frontier

A word can only be erased by language

Not until I have a miracle to tell  
will some goose break formation overhead  
and flutter down and proffer  
me its wing feather to write this down  
saying in goose talk My job is dome  
you have to get the ink yourself

or from yourself

the twin miracles of language:  
writing and erasing

only the written language has both,  
only the written is complete

speech has an imperfect form of erasure  
called forgetting

and silence is hopeless,  
silence is never silent enough

silence remembers, silence resounds

I can just tell you the images  
you have to do the theory part yourself

theoria is seeing

theory's in the eye of the beholder

Theory is seeing this.

8 November 2002



## **CLERMONT**

Waiting in the light a hill  
at my side we walked  
through an hysteria of leaves

hypnosis of same color  
subtle shift, susurrus  
of rustling information

endless to move  
is to make sound  
my eyes wide open not to see

8 November 2002

## **DREAM RAIDERS**

I knew a girl once who could blast her way into my dreams. A day or so later, this is before e-mail, a phone call or letter would come, and we'd be in the same room of conversation I'd met her in while I was dreaming. These dreams were easy, no monsters, just the slight weirdness of being with someone without especially choosing to. And this was strange enough so that I'd wake up asking myself What was that? Who is dreaming me now? Then I'd remember her skill at this coercive interior conversation. What did we talk about in those compulsory interviews? Whatever was on her mind, not mine. As far as I can tell, I have no mind for something to be on.

8 November 2002

## CHROMOSOMES

The chromosomes are waiting.

We are colored people because we have  
chromosomes, right? The dictionary  
told me that: *color bodies*

and you are dangerous  
because I'm in your power  
whenever we meet

the roots are lies  
that grow up to be tree

that's why the etymology of anything  
is such a sudden way to God

why couldn't we not have had anything  
but what the Lord said

when he was a man in a boat a man in a crowd  
just listen to what I say he said  
and don't do anything to it  
just tell it to the next woman you meet  
the next soldier whisper it to the waters of some well

so by the end of the day  
everyone will get the news.

9 November 2002

## MISSIONARY MISTAKES

Stuff you put in salads what is it  
nasturtium flowers  
spicy little colors, bites

every word  
must have its own mistake

the geography of error  
my blue globe

I have known the roundness  
and the hard  
the place where maps  
give way to fingers  
in a world of thorns

a country where it's always midnight  
and your name

glories like snapdragons  
brandied raisins in blue flames

memory is a perpetual burning

I left a lot of things in San Francisco  
but not my heart  
my driver's license stays right here  
four rooms and one piano

taste my fingers  
this is what old language tastes like  
in your young lips

my heart come home  
a little singed from the Oakland fire  
but otherwise right as the Rights of Man  
and of the Citizen sourdough  
the smell of airports  
no Honolulu terrorism

just the indoor rain  
the species-list damp in your hands  
you visit the black-leaved codiaeum  
glossy with red afterthoughts around the rim

lava cooling inside out  
labia  
a stone street walking by

a river in remembering  
carries weird fish you never see  
the rafts of all those evenings

you came to see me  
displayed yourself as the horizon  
due south of Diamond Head  
all those unlikely stars

so I get the word wrong again  
is that a fault or a philosophy

make sense of what I give you  
it comes from love  
and who knows where it goes

glad runagates you stay at homes  
dream wetly of in August dawns  
why couldn't you turn silver to  
spread sail, climb down from the volcano

why is everybody else on fire  
and you just damp on your pillow  
while the Merrimack mill town wakes outside

and immigrants wait at the canteen  
to buy a little chili for their bread  
and who are you, grey midlands?

Don't blame me I ran away to see  
the court ladies strutting in the queen's roses  
their bosoms empowering me to ask  
significant questions at the Admiralty  
concerning breadfruit in the colonies

so they put me in charge of this ship *Forever*  
to try out my powers and I have brought it  
with loss of less than dozen lives

through inconceivable absences and mean reefs  
all the way to Taprobane and back  
with a Dutchman painting pictures on my hull  
and a girl from Manila hidden in my cabin  
you don't have to know the whole truth

this is only a narration

a relation of my years among the Jesuits  
bringing my erroneous perhaps even heretical  
interpretations out east  
to wash them clean in oceans  
and anybody's ears.

They listened  
just like you now getting the idea  
a man talks not to communicate  
but be cleansed, relieved of the terrible burden  
of his own silence broken into words  
the silence that is so thick inside me  
I'll never run out of things to say I think.

9 November 2002